CAMPAIGN AGAINST
carf
RACISM & FASCISM

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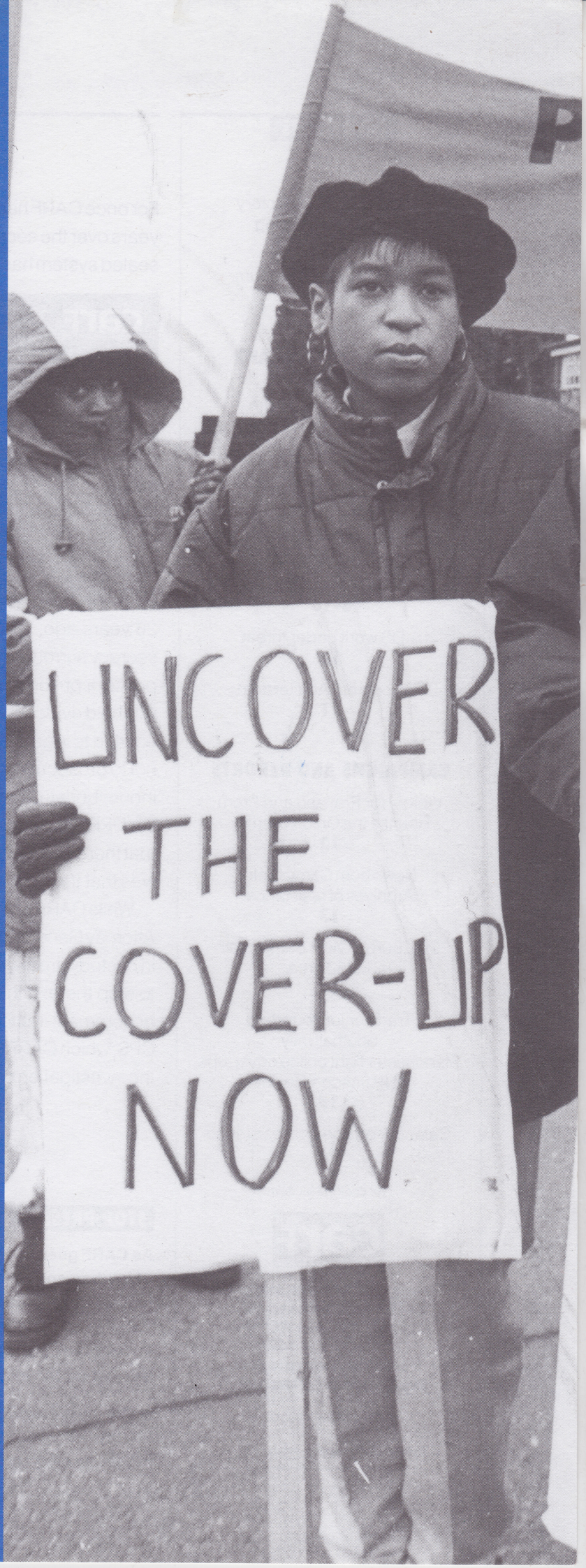
CPS in the dock

SPECIAL FOCUS on Europe, asylum and immigration



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Cover photo: Mark Salmon

CAMPAIGN AGAINST carF RACISM & FASCISM

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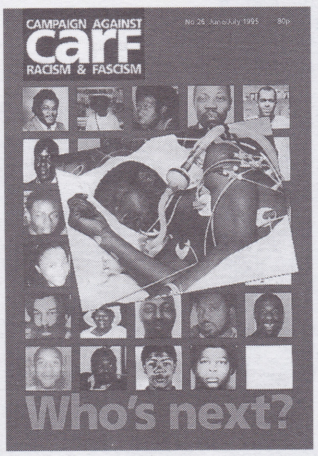
EDITORIAL

For once CARF has something to celebrate. After campaigning for some ten years over the secrecy involved in black deaths in custody, the hermetically sealed system has ruptured.



One of the most significant anti-racist victories was won in July when the Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbara Mills, exposed by legal challenges in the High Court, was forced to admit that the decisions by the Crown Prosecution Service not to prosecute officers involved in two deaths, were flawed. The families of Nigerian Shiji Lapite and Irish traveller Richard O'Brien, their supporters and lawyers are to be congratulated for bringing the DPP to account.

Ever since the death in Stoke Newington police station in north London of housewife Aseta Simms 26 years ago, black groups have campaigned to tear away the shroud of secrecy surrounding deaths in custody. Till now the shroud was impregnable: police or prison officers closed ranks, officers were not disciplined, coroners withheld evidence from lawyers representing bereaved families (who are not entitled to legal aid) and, till now, the DPP has never had to justify a decision not to prosecute officers involved in 'unlawful killings'. Till now, verdicts from inquest juries of 'unlawful killing' have been meaningless for families because the DPP has decided on each occasion, in an apparent knee-jerk response, that there was 'not enough evidence to prosecute'. Until now, the implication was that the police and prison officers were above the law.

While CARF welcomes the fact that Judge Butler has been appointed by the Attorney General to re-examine the two cases and the way decisions on deaths in custody are generally handled by the CPS, the inquiry must not be allowed to stop there. If this is not merely to be a damage limitation exercise for the government, it should also deal with the institutional racism at the heart of the CPS, which CARF has highlighted repeatedly in the context of failures of will in the investigation of murderous racist violence. ■

STOP PRESS

As CARF goes to press, news comes in of another victory. Home secretary Jack Straw has announced a judicial inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence case. The long-awaited inquiry, to be headed by former High Court judge Sir William Macpherson, will investigate not only the way 18-year-old Stephen met his death in 1993, but also the police and CPS investigation, to 'identify lessons to be learned for the investigation and prosecution of racially motivated offences'.

In our next issue, CARF will discuss what campaigners expect from such an inquiry. For now, we welcome its setting up, for which the Lawrence family have fought so long and hard. ■

Justin Williams

Deaths in custody victory

CARF examines the importance of the climb-down by the Director of Public Prosecutions over deaths in custody

An unprecedented victory was won in the High Court on 23 July when the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Police Complaints Authority admitted that when they had decided not to prosecute or discipline any officers for the killing of **Shiji Lapite** they had failed to give proper consideration to all the evidence in the case. This unique admission took place as lawyers acting for the families of Shiji Lapite and **Richard O'Brien**, who both died violent deaths in custody, asked the High Court for a judicial review of the decision by the DPP not to prosecute the officers involved.

Till then the Crown Prosecution Service, headed by the DPP, had been impervious to its many critics, particularly those among the black community. But, from the first victory, events moved fast. On 24 July an admission came that the decision on O'Brien would also be re-examined. Then, an inquiry into the CPS was ordered. Then, DPP Barbara Mills lost her say on whether police or prison staff should be prosecuted.

A pattern in black deaths

This is not a personal matter about the style of one DPP or another. What is at stake is far larger. There is a clear pattern of deaths in custody wherein black men die where undue force has been used. Yet, in case after case, a verdict in the coroner's court of unlawful killing, brought in by a jury, is systematically undermined by the criminal justice system because no one ever faces criminal charges.

In case after case CARF has, over the years, exposed how families, already handicapped by proceedings at inquests and the cost of employing their own lawyers, fight to get at the truth of how their loved one died. But when, in those very rare cases, a verdict of unlawful killing has been returned, the authorities have taken no action against the officers responsible.

Unlawful killing verdicts undermined

In 135 black deaths in custody monitored by the Institute of Race Relations since the killing of **David Oluwale** in 1969, unlawful killing verdicts were only returned six times. On no occasion did charges follow. It took the family of **Winston Rose**, killed by police in Walthamstow in 1981, nine years to win damages but no one was ever prosecuted for his death. Twice the DPP decided that officers who unlawfully killed **Oliver Pryce** in Cleveland in 1990 should face no charges. In 1995, only after the family issued a civil writ, did the constabulary admit liability and the family get damages. Again no officer was charged or disciplined. In the case of asylum-seeker, **Omasase Lumumba**, who was killed in Pentonville prison in October 1991, lawyers for the family had to get the inquest adjourned so as to get a judicial review of the refusal by the coroner to allow the jury even to consider 'unlawful killing' as a possible verdict at all. They unanimously returned such a verdict – when they were allowed to – after 30 minutes deliberation. Again no officers were charged or disciplined. (In the two other cases in which verdicts of unlawful killing were returned, relating to Hells Angel John Mikkelson, who died in 1985, and Leon Patterson, who died in 1992, police successfully challenged the verdicts and obtained fresh inquests, which returned verdicts of misadventure or accidental death.)

Families seeking justice

The whole history of deaths in custody has been the history of family members seeking justice and peace of mind. The now grown-up daughter of Aseta Simms, who died in 1971, is still trying to come to terms with her death. Leon Patterson's sister is still

Richard O'Brien. Unlawfully killed by police officers, but none has stood trial

Omasase Lumumba. Unlawfully killed by prison officers, but none were ever prosecuted

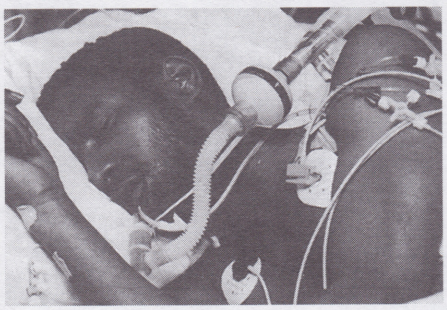
Picture above:
Shiji Lapite's family have fought a long campaign to bring his killers to justice

trying to get answers about the injuries and bruising she saw on her twin's body. For years Clara Buckley, mother of Orville Blackwood, who died in Broadmoor, fought through two inquests to get someone held responsible for his death. 'We have to work together as a community,' she told CARF at the time, 'to make sure we challenge a system that is seriously going wrong. I want his death to be the last of its kind.' The families of both Brian and Wayne Douglas (who died in south London in 1995 in incidents with the police) are trying to get inquests reopened because they do not accept the verdicts of misadventure and accidental death which exonerated the police.

When, last year, in the wake of the inquest verdict CARF spoke to Raju Bhatt, the lawyer for the Lapite family, he was clearly angry about the legal system's inability to punish 'extra-judicial killings' and to provide the political will 'to control officers of the police and prison service'. Inquest, the organisation which campaigns on deaths in custody, says the DPP and CPS now have 'the opportunity to send a clear message to bereaved families and the wider public that these deaths do matter and that police officers will be subject to the full force of the law.'

Let us hope that the Butler inquiry does not just concentrate on these two cases as if they were aberrations. The whole system of investigation of deaths in custody has to be brought under scrutiny. ■

Paul Freeley


David Hoffman

Above: **Ibrahima Sey died after police used CS spray on him. Will the truth ever be revealed?**
Below: **Brian Douglas. His family is campaigning to overturn an 'open' inquest verdict on his death.**

Prisoner left hanging

When can human beings just stand and watch another human being hanging? When the dying man is a black prisoner and the onlookers are prison guards.

The vexed question of the privatisation of the British prison service has again come to the fore following the death of Peter Austin at Brentford magistrates' court on 29 January. Disturbing evidence emerged at the inquest held in July, where the verdict was accidental death aggravated by lack of care by the guards.

Securicor staff (employed to guard prisoners in courts for five years) left Peter hanging by his T-shirt from the light fitting for five to ten minutes as they discussed whether he was faking his death or trying to kill himself for real. Their excuses included the stereotypes that have now become so familiar in other black death cases: they were afraid he would be unpredictable, he might be violent, he might be feigning and getting ready to attack. After he had been cut down, a bail hearing went ahead outside his cell as he lay slumped on the floor inside.

Privatising detention

Securicor is one of four private companies with a Home Office contract to escort prisoners from jails and police stations to court and to look after them during detention in cells. Securicor's training course for its officers, which covers legal issues, prison management, security supervision and first aid, is supposed to bring its staff to the same standard as prison officers.

Lack of professionalism and humanity

It emerged at the inquest that the seven custody staff, who had had only three hours' training on how to recognise and provide support to suicidal detainees, ignored all the signs that Peter showed. Despite the fact that he had tried to cut his wrists with a plastic fork at Chiswick police station, had seen a police doctor three times, that accompanying documents stressed he was mentally ill, that he had told officers he was hearing voices and had then smeared his cell with excrement, Peter was not placed on a special watch, as recommended for potential suicides. Nor was medical help sought for him; he was not, the Securicor staff decided, physically ill.

The organisation Inquest, which has been helping the family of Peter Austin, is appalled at what happened. They have called the Securicor staff training in first aid and suicide prevention grossly inadequate. 'Staff displayed a complete lack of professionalism and humanity', said an Inquest spokesperson.

Who monitors Securicor?

The death has also brought to light the fact that the panel of lay observers to London courts, appointed to look at the conditions in which prisoners are kept and transported, was specifically told in June 1994 that the members were not to comment on matters relating to Securicor as these were 'contractual' and therefore 'commercially confidential' between the Home Office and the company. According to a letter published in the *Independent* from one lay observer who resigned in disgust in 1996: 'Almost from the outset, we were limited in what we were permitted to comment on; matters relating to Securicor staff or the physical conditions in which prisoners were held, we were told, were beyond our remit, thereby rendering us virtually impotent.'

Second death

This is the second time that a black man has died whilst in the 'care' of a private security firm. In June 1990 Kimpua Nsimba's body was found in Harmondsworth detention centre 20 hours after he had hanged himself. It emerged then that Group 4 had no training in suicide prevention. The coroner at Austin's inquest was obviously concerned about levels of training too. And the Prison Service has since said that it will review the suicide training of its private companies. The Prison Service also took the unusual step of immediately suspending the seven Securicor staff involved in the death. ■

The nationalist curriculum

CARF asked radical educationalist Chris Searle to assess Labour's education programme for schools.

Picture: Sheffield Newspapers Ltd.

The new Labour government has inherited a Conservative superstructure of education legislation and curriculum based firstly on a market concept of education, and secondly on a view of school curriculum which is narrow, state-ordained and wrapped around backward shibboleths of 'national identity' as continually propounded by the chief of the National Curriculum quango, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Dr Nick Tate. Dr Tate's prescriptions are that the National Curriculum should revolve around a strong sense of what he calls the 'majority culture' rather than what he calls the 'misapplied cultural egalitarianism which wants to give equal attention to everything'.

The Education Reform Act

The key question is what New Labour will do with this legacy of legislation centred around the pivotal 1988 Education Reform Act, which is the systematic basis of the Conservative restoration in British education. The party has never advocated or developed plans for its repeal. All its subsequent paraphernalia, from the re-establishment of selection with privileged grant-maintained schools and city technology colleges, to the forefronting of the national inspection service OFSTED, remain securely in place. Worse than this, they stay as the basis for organising what New Labour Secretary for State for education David Blunkett repeatedly calls a 'crusade'. This pulpit-style approach has already been manifested in Blunkett's instinct to 'shame' so-called failing schools which do not adhere to OFSTED diktats and formulae, putting dunce-caps on the heads of entire school populations, and dividing and confusing the predominantly inner-city communities which most of these schools serve.

Cultural exclusion

The 'orders' for English teaching in the National Curriculum exemplify the grotesque level of cultural exclusion. The list of 'canonical' works of literature for study at 'Key Stages 3 and 4' do not include a single poem, play or novel written by a black author, whether in English or translation. And this in a decade where, for example, the Nobel Prize for literature has been awarded to powerful black writers in English from Wole Soyinka of Nigeria and Toni Morrison of the USA, to Derek Walcott of St Lucia. There is much to be done to pressurise the new government to change its tack. Not only the fundamental message of the need for a new education Act, which dismantles the market system and denies selection between students and competition between schools within the violent league-table culture, but also the development of an open, inclusive curriculum which welcomes localised democratic approaches to curriculum development, and takes as its basis the cultural and linguistic strengths of the students and communities of the school's constituent neighbourhoods. In a phrase from Toni Morrison's 1993 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, a rejection of the 'lethal discourses of exclusion'. The huge achievement of teenage bilingualism, attained by so many thousands of inner-city young people, needs to be vindicated, but also accredited as an equivalent of one 'A' level for university entry. Anti-racist and internationalist education needs to be restored beyond the former importance given to it by progressive local education authorities in the seventies and eighties, to a position at the centre of curriculum development, and the stranglehold of OFSTED released. Inspection of schools could then become the precursor of genuine pedagogical and curriculum support, and not repression and fear – or the unending, wasted in-service sessions on 'How to prepare for inspection' or the frequent post-inspection time wasting of 'How to make an Action Plan after OFSTED'.

The standards rush

The 'standards' rush being pursued by the government will find no golden seams in the inner-cities without a wholesale change in curriculum – to a cognitive basis which tells the real stories of black and working class people's lives and achievements in Britain and elsewhere in the world where they have lived, created and made their lives. While 'standards' remain judged by attainment in the narrow perspectives of official knowledge and 'national' cognitive identities, many thousands of school students in Britain, as the US experience of the 'standards movement' has shown, will remain on the periphery of state education, 'perceiving school as another world, another culture.'●

From every point of the education system – from teachers, school students, governors, parents as individuals and part of community organisation, universities and teacher education departments – pressure needs to be mounted and sustained. If New Labour continues with its present policies, instead of the Conservative restoration being dissolved within our school system, it will take an even firmer, more intractable and increasingly damaging grip – which will continue to exclude thousands of our young people from an affirmative, meaningful and motivating school experience. ■

● Quotation from 'The Standards Movement in Education: Will Poor and Minority Students Benefit?' by Jo-Anne Wilson Keenan and Anne Wheelock *Poverty & Race vol 6: no 3 May/June 1997*

SPECIAL FOCUS ON EUROPE, ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION

Immigration: the politics of compromise

In March 1996, for the first time in Italy's post-war history, the centre-left came to power. Just two months after Tony Blair's New Labour formed the first centre Left government in the UK for 18 years, the Socialist party unexpectedly won the general election in France. Three centre-left governments in power in Europe – and Social Democrats taking part in coalition governments in Austria and Sweden. Could there be a fresh approach to asylum and immigration, with a centre-left coalition forming a bloc to fight the racism of the European governmental process?

CARF argues that, just as there is no fundamental shift in approach to immigration in the UK under Labour, the same holds across the Continent – with the possible exception of France. And where Social Democrats have entered into coalition governments, the picture is even bleaker. The Social Democrats in Austria are actually outflanking the Conservatives to prove their 'tough' credentials on immigration.

FRANCE – AN EXCEPTION?

Within 20 days of taking office, French prime minister Lionel Jospin issued a text which paved the way for the regularisation of certain categories of undocumented workers. Between 10,000 and 40,000 people could benefit. In the absence of overarching legislation, a circular was sent out by interior minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement, asking the prefectures to issue residence permits according to set criteria. Spouses of French citizens and spouses of foreigners with legal residence, children, sick people, students, foreign families who are long established in France – all will, hopefully, benefit.

While there is no doubt that the government's action was a victory for the *sans papiers* movement (the government had much-publicised talks with its leaders), there are real causes for concern. Not only has the government given too much discretion to the notoriously racist prefectures to decide who can receive residence permits, but it creates a hierarchy of illegals, giving those outside the priority categories, particularly single men, zero chance of regularisation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTEST

The credit for the Socialists' measures surely goes, not to the government, but to the movement of *sans papiers* which, through concerted action, inspired mass demonstrations and extra-parliamentary activity across France. Until a civil disobedience campaign was launched in February 1997, highlighting a proposal in the Debré immigration package which would have forced people to report the departure of foreign guests to the local town hall, the Socialists (then in opposition) had offered no dissent in parliament. Socialist leader Lionel Jospin even stayed away from a 150,000-strong demonstration in Paris lest his party in opposition be identified with the anti-racist cause. Once the campaign took root, however, Socialist MPs found their voices, accusing the government of taking a step towards fascism and comparing the Debré proposals to the anti-Jewish measures taken by the Vichy government.

In opposition, the Socialists promised to repeal the notorious Pasqua and Debré laws. In power, they announced that interim measures will be formalised in an immigration law to be introduced in the autumn. Until then, it is not known whether the government has truly changed tack or whether the measures are intended to tidy up the vast ambiguities of French immigration law and the arbitrary nature of immigration decisions, before a harsh new reality sets in. Already talk is of 'stemming migratory flows' and closing the doors to future immigrants.

ITALIAN SCHIZOPHRENIA

In Italy, there is no mass movement to propel a centre-left government into action; rather, where there is movement, it is that of popular racism fomented by the National Alliance and the Northern League. Politicians like the League's Irene Pivetti (who says Albanian refugees arriving on the Adriatic coast should be

thrown back into the sea) and Marco Formentino ('Each extra vote for the League means one less Albanian in Milan') have led the racist charge. The ruling Olive Tree Alliance has wavered between good intentions and alarmist emergency measures, leading to disastrous consequences such as the sinking of an Albanian refugee boat by the Italian navy off the Otranto Straits with the loss of over 60 lives. The government's schizophrenic approach is epitomised by a new immigration bill approved by the Council of Ministers in February which, on the one hand, introduces tough new measures for expulsion while, on the other, making vague promises to grant voting rights to regularised workers. Prime minister Romano Prodi insists that the government's intention is to end the politics of emergency in dealing with immigration and introduce instead 'governed migration'. But immigrant groups argue that the bill paves the way towards a police state.

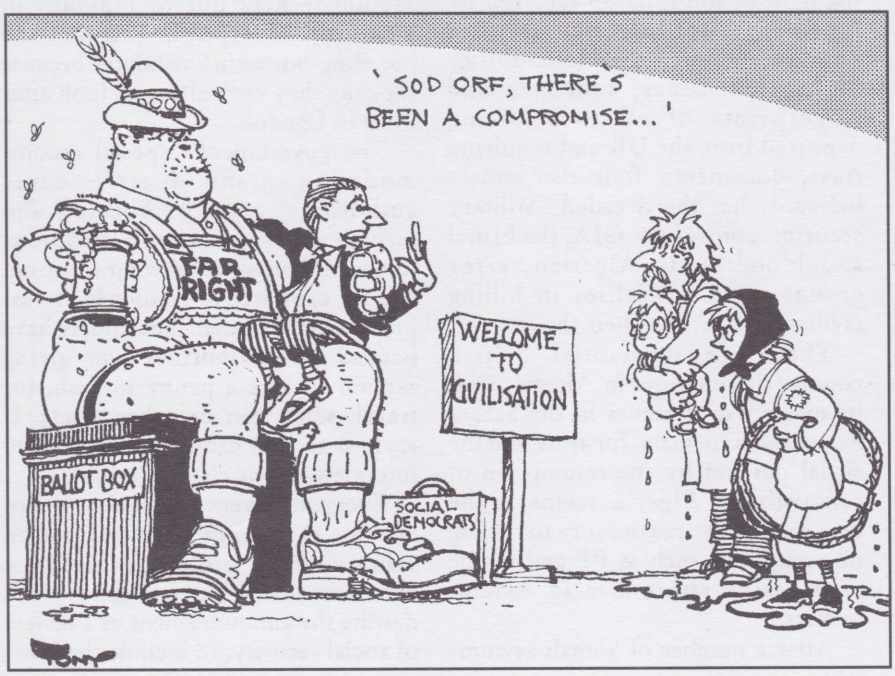
NO VISION

The situation in Italy is ironic because on past showing it would be the Italian Left rather than the French Socialists who would veer towards a more liberal immigration approach. But without strong direction from outside parliament, and with the narrowest grip on power, the Olive Tree Alliance seems more concerned to appease racist constituencies, and to meet the criteria for entry in October into the Schengen Accord.

Attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable is the Swedish way too. Announcing new asylum legislation in December 1996, Social Democrat Mad Bjornemann announced that the government's aim was to 'navigate a passage between racist and anti-racist opinion, knowing however the voting power of the former'. Compromise is the name of the game. But compromise is forever on the Right's terms. No alternative vision for immigration and asylum procedures is offered, but the EC's 'Fortress Europe' framework adopted wholesale. Commenting on the new Italian law, Statewatch's Cristiano Codaghnone rejects the argument that the new law represents the best possible compromise, given diplomatic pressure from European partners and the political position of the democratic opposition and some segments of the ruling coalition. 'Such pragmatism serves to legitimise a conservative approach to migration and leaves the progressive Left with no distinctive programme of reform,' he argues.

APPEASING THE FAR RIGHT

In Austria, compromise is a euphemism for the appeasement of the far Right. A social democrat minister in the coalition government has delighted his conservative colleagues by introducing proposals geared towards limiting future immigration to key workers, bringing in an annual quota for family reunion and making it harder than ever for migrants within Austria to gain benefits. Unlike in France, UK and Italy, humanitarian concerns aren't even paid lip service. Under the proposals wives of Austrians (and their children) can be deported if they are divorced or if their husband dies



ITALIAN HUNGER STRIKES SPREAD

There has been a wave of hunger strikes by asylum-seekers and immigrants across Italy. In a dangerous precedent, a north African hunger striker was ignored by the prison authorities and left to die. Is there another *sans papiers* movement in the making?

Racism toward refugees has spiralled since the crisis in Albania prompted the flight of an estimated 10,000 Albanians across the Adriatic in fishing boats and old ferries. Fifteen survivors of the disaster on the Otranto Straits (when an Italian naval corvette collided with a refugee boat, claiming over 60 lives), held in a barracks in Brindisi, claim that they have been abandoned by the authorities and are denied any contact with the outside world. The Albanians, who started their hunger strike in May, want the boat that sank recovered and a proper burial for the dead, as well as protesting against the conditions in which they are kept.

DEGRADATION Unlike the *sans papiers* in France, the hunger strikers in Italy are not protesting their lack of papers; rather it is the dreadful conditions in which they are held that is the immediate catalyst for action. There is growing concern about conditions in the so-called 'welcome centres' where families are separated, husbands from wives, children from parents. In Brindisi, for instance, one hundred families live in an old naval college with no heating and open sewers. In May, fifteen people started a hunger strike at the via Negarville welcome centre in Turin to protest against the regime there. A radio operated at full volume wakes them and they must vacate the building by 8am. Without papers, they have no right to social security. Existing on about £10 pocket money per month from the local council, the only opportunity they have for cooking is when three gas rings are made available for 90 minutes each day.

DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL Hunger strikes are also being undertaken by detainees protesting their innocence and the long periods of detention without trial (a common feature of the Italian criminal justice system). By mid-June, three Algerians were in a critical condition after having spent 52 days without food. The men are accused of arms trafficking and criminal activity linked to an Algerian fundamentalist group. They protest their innocence and demand to see the evidence against them. One is under threat of extradition to France.

Scandalously, another hunger striker, a north African undocumented worker, was just left to die after spending two months on hunger in a Turin prison. An inquiry has been launched as to whether his life could have been saved by forced feeding. Dinari Elai Ben Lazar, who protested his innocence, had been held on remand for five months for a drugs offence. Ben Lazar was one of around 2,500 'illegals' living in Padua which, as the capital of Italy's high-tech service sector, relies on a ready supply of undocumented workers. According to campaigners, the story of Dinari Elai Ben Lazar is that of a 'non-person who had lived underground for four years. His death draws attention to the plight of Italy's *sans papiers*'.

within four years of their taking up legal residence in Austria. This also applies to women who leave their husbands because of violence or abuse. As *Tatblatt* concludes: 'The purpose of the new laws seems to be to construct as many reasons as possible to allow for the deportation of migrants.'

Compromise in Austria is increasingly compromise with the belligerent anti-immigrant tone of the Freedom Party. In the last European parliament elections, it secured one in every two working class votes. In France, too, as the Front National makes inroads into the working-class vote, the threat of such compromise looms large. Will French Socialists lance the FN boil by challenging its anti-immigrant message? Only in the autumn will we know for sure whether they intend to chart a new path or whether the politics of compromise has won over another partner. ■

GERMANY: PALESTINIANS UNDER THREAT

Nearly 10,000 Palestinians, and an unknown number of Kurds and Bedouins, are under threat of deportation to Lebanon as Germany puts the finishing touches to a readmission agreement under which Lebanon takes back the refugees in exchange for aid and loans.

The refugees fled during the 15-year civil war in Lebanon. They were never granted full refugee status, but were given temporary protection as civil war refugees because Lebanon refused to issue them with travel documents for their return. But Germany has been seeking means of expelling them, and in December last year began removing a trickle of Palestinians who had been granted Lebanese nationality. Then, in April and May 1997, Palestinians were warned that their temporary residence permits would only be renewed once, as the authorities envisage that the readmission agreement will soon be in force.

While Germany is not the only country to have begun removing Palestinian refugees to Lebanon in recent years (the British government has removed a small number), it is the first to attempt such a large-scale and systematic removal, and the first, so far as is known, to sign an agreement with Lebanon. Campaigners say that the refugees are not wanted in Lebanon, where they have no civil or social rights and live in very poor conditions. The vast majority are unable to enter Israel or the Palestinian Autonomous Authority territory. Another invasion of southern Lebanon is on the cards after the Israeli bombardment of villages with illegal weapons of war, 'flechette' shells which release hundreds of tiny steel darts into the victims' bodies, killing them by literally cutting them to pieces (victims are usually old men, women and children), and Hizbollah revenge attacks on Israel's proxy troops, the SLA.

For further information contact: Informationsprojekt Naher und Mittlerer Osten eV, Berlin, Dahlmannstr 31, D-10629 Berlin, fax: 49-30-862 38 49, e-mail: 106411.2356@Compuserve.com

What's up Jack?

In the last issue, CARF examined Labour's promises on asylum and immigration under their motto: 'Fairer, firmer, faster'. Now we assess Labour's performance three months after their election.

REMOVAL TO 'SAFE' COUNTRIES

The moratorium on removal of asylum-seekers to Congo (former Zaire) remains, as does that on Sierra Leone. But Algerians, who benefited from a policy of non-removal after the reported death of a returned asylum-seeker, began to be removed again at the end of May after another report claimed the man had been seen alive and well at the British Embassy.

The report is unconfirmed, and the speedy resumption of removals to a civil war zone in which almost 100 civilians were killed in just one week in July, is alarming. Particularly in the light of information received by CARF that the Algerian security services requested the Home Office to provide names, addresses and fingerprints of all those being deported from the UK and requiring travel documents. It is also widely believed that the dreaded 'Military security' control the GIA, the brutal and bloodthirsty Algerian terror group which specialises in killing civilians by slitting their throats.

There are substantial British commercial interests in Algeria, with its massive oil reserves in the Sahara desert and its demand for arms, and the signal put out by the resumption of removals to Algeria seems to be designed to give reassurance to the big oil companies such as BP and to the arms dealers rather than to asylum-seekers.

After a number of Somali asylum-seekers legally challenged their removal to Germany, the country they had come through to get to Britain, the government agreed it would not try to return Somalis to either France or Germany, which send them back to Somalia on the basis that where there's no state, there can't be any persecution so they can't be refugees. But recent reports indicate that the government is renegeing on this agreement.

ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND BENEFITS

London boroughs Camden and Westminster, at opposite ends of the political spectrum, are planning to ship asylum-seekers out to lodgings in Toxteth, Liverpool, and seaside boarding-houses in Eastbourne because they say they can't afford to look after them in London.

The government's special accommodation grant doesn't cover authorities' costs of housing and feeding asylum-seekers. Conditions in bed and breakfast accommodation, run by exploitative landlords at vast profits, are abysmal. The courts have banned local authorities from giving asylum-seekers a penny in cash, for travel, sanitation or other needs. If asylum-seekers can't travel to asylum interviews, their claim is refused.

Everyone agrees that restoration of benefits is the only sane and human solution to the problem of destitute and homeless asylum-seekers – but despite the announcement of a review of social security, to include the posi-

tion of asylum-seekers, in early June, nothing has been done to reinstate benefits.

THE ONIBIYO FAMILY

When in October 1995 Abdul Onibiyo was deported to Nigeria despite having lived in Britain for over 20 years, and the Tories started deportation proceedings against his son Ade, Jack Straw was a prominent member of the campaign for the family, who was aware that Abdul had disappeared in Nigeria on his deportation there, knew of the danger to him from the murderous military regime, and helped secure an eleventh-hour safe haven in Guyana for Ade. Yet on 27 June 1997, after Abdul had been released on bail from a Nigerian prison and escaped to a neighbouring west African country, his application to rejoin his family in Britain was refused. The Home Office argues that deportation was proper for people illegally in the country and that deportees normally have to wait three years before the deportation order is lifted.

Meanwhile, son Ade is still stuck in Guyana, and Joyce Onibiyo, Abdul's wife, and their other two Nigerian-born children are still under threat of deportation.

'FIRMER' vs 'FAIRER'

The treatment of the Onibiyos illustrates the contradiction in Labour's policies. In refusing entry clearance because of Abdul Onibiyo's previous illegal status, the Home Office is being firm but not fair. Not fair to the family's history: Abdul and Joyce were in Britain for ten years from 1964 and had permanent residence when they left; their two oldest children were born here and even while they were back in Nigeria from 1978 to 1983 while Abdul worked on a water project there, he paid national insurance contributions in Britain.

Although his permanent residence was revoked on his return in 1983 because of the length of time spent abroad, he was in the country for a further 12 years, attempting to resolve his status with the Home Office, before the dawn raid which removed him from his family and adoptive home.

The decision is not fair in human or legal terms. It ignores the fact that the family is unable to be united in any country other than Britain: there is no question of the family being able to return to Nigeria, in the light of Abdul's imprisonment there, and while Guyana was willing to act as a temporary refuge for Ade it could not be expected to host the whole family indefinitely. The refusal to allow Abdul back into Britain probably puts the government in breach of the European Human Rights Convention, Article 8 of which guarantees the right to respect for family life.

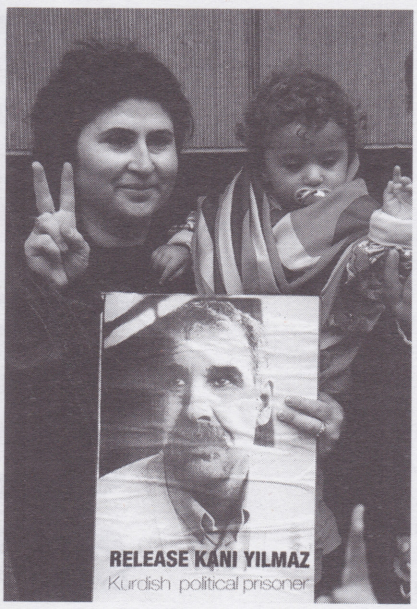
MINISTERS' DISCRETION OR FAIRER RULES?

It is worrying that the government saw the Onibiyo case as an opportunity to show off its firmness rather than its fairness. The government has conceded in a number of other high-profile cases: Nigerian environmentalist Sunday Ogunwobi and his wife and three children have been allowed to stay after a marathon three years in sanctuary in Downs Baptist church, Hackney, east London. Prakash and Prem Chavrimootoo, the battered wife of a British citizen, who left him to escape further violence during the 'probationary year' of their marriage, and her son, have been told they can stay after a seven year campaign against deportation. And 7-year-old Whitney Forrester, threatened with deportation to an orphanage in Jamaica after her mother abandoned her, despite her UK-resident father's willingness to care for her, was also given permission to stay.

It would be invidious to draw comparisons between these high-profile cases or to say that one was more meritorious, more deserving of compassion, than others. Campaigners will not play that game. But neither will they tolerate the apparently random selection by the Home Office of 'compassionate' cases on which to show off their 'caring' credentials. A fairer system is not merely one in which more compassionate cases are given the benefit of a minister's personal kindness. It is one in which the rules are drawn so as to include rather than exclude, where there are not wholly different rules for European and non-European citizens, where people are not forced to make cruel choices such as whether to keep the family together at the risk of life, or split the family to ensure safety.

There have been rumours, since Labour's election, of such fairer rules. Rules which will allow families to be reunited in Britain without going through the elaborate hoops of the

At the end of July, the Home Office indicated that it would appeal against a High Court decision that the policy of refusing asylum-seekers permission to work is unlawful. Judge Owen condemned the policy, formulated by the Tories and zealously continued under Labour, as 'draconian and irrational'.



Mehmet Kava

Following the rejection by the House of Lords of Kani Yilmaz's appeal against extradition to Germany, over 300 people demonstrated outside the Home Office. Supporters of the Kurdish leader point out that Jack Straw, as shadow home secretary, signed an early day motion protesting Yilmaz's detention on national security grounds in 1994.

In Austria, the chancellor has called for the reopening of the investigation into the 1989 murders in Vienna of three exiled Kurdish politicians. The widow of one of the victims accuses Austria of botching the investigation into the deaths for fear of a scandal about illegal weapons sales.

SPECIAL FOCUS ON EUROPE, ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION

present rules (such as proving that an elderly parent has no other relative to care for her at home, or that a single parent has had 'sole responsibility' for a child before allowing the child to join the parent).

It is rumoured, too, that Labour's immigration minister Mike O'Brien has responded sympathetically to proposals to bring those fleeing civil war or seeking 'exceptional leave' on compassionate grounds within the appeals system instead of leaving them at the whim of ministers. That would be a significant improvement. For now, though, they are only rumours. ■

SPECIAL FOCUS ON EUROPE, ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION

AIDS work under threat

In the last issue, CARF investigated how treatment for AIDS/HIV has less to do with need than with immigration status. In this issue, we report on a threat to AIDS charities which work with undocumented migrants.

Ministers' knee-jerk reaction to a right-wing 'scare' story threatens to cut the funding and the government health education contracts of Britain's foremost AIDS charity, the Terrence Higgins Trust, which receives a total of £2m a year in public funds, £1m from central government. The funding of the Hackney HIV Centre is also threatened. Why? Because these organisations refuse to discriminate against HIV or AIDS sufferers who have no permission to stay in Britain. After the *Daily Mail* claimed that advice workers in both organisations were helping illegal immigrants to stay in the country so that they could obtain life-saving treatment, immigration minister Mike O'Brien demanded an immediate investigation by Home Office officials, while health minister Frank Dobson also demanded to see the *Mail* evidence.

The *Mail's* investigation (which the paper ran on 30 June under the headline 'Scandal of the illegal immigrant benefits industry') involved sending reporters, posing as an HIV-positive Ghanaian overstayer and his white girlfriend, to the two organisations, in order to 'expose' how taxpayers' money is squandered on sick illegal immigrants. The two were welcomed with compassion and kindness at the Hackney HIV Centre (government-funded to the tune of £400,000). The centre's staff reassured them that the man's immigration status would not affect their approach, and the man was advised where to seek life-saving treatment. He was referred to the Terrence Higgins Trust's housing and legal adviser. The *Mail* claims that the adviser colluded with him in presenting a false asylum claim to enable him to stay and obtain free housing and benefits. This is strenuously denied by the Trust, whose chief executive has confirmed that the staff would never encourage any client to lie or mislead any government agencies.

According to current Home Office policy on HIV and AIDS, AIDS sufferers with no right to be in the country will be treated 'compassionately' and may be allowed to stay, while those who are merely HIV positive will not. Following the European Court of Human Rights' recent condemnation of Britain for attempting to expel an AIDS sufferer to St Kitts (see *CARF 38*), the policy will not be allowed to get tougher. But, as the GMIAU points out in an article in its latest newsletter, 'Positively Racist', the 1989 NHS Charges for Overseas Visitors Regulations state that people with HIV who are not ordinarily resident in the UK must pay for hospital treatment relating to HIV, other than diagnostic testing and counselling. This means that visitors, short-term students and (particularly) those without permission to stay must pay; this in turn requires the NHS to investigate the immigration status of all HIV/AIDS patients to see if they should pay. In the words of GMIAU, 'It is at this point of internal control that prejudice and discrimination in respect to HIV/AIDS coincides precisely with the racist prejudices on which immigration controls are constructed.'

In taking their cue from the tabloid press, Mike O'Brien and Frank Dobson missed the opportunity to make a forceful statement about the importance of non-discriminatory treatment for life-threatening diseases, and to re-establish the principle on which the NHS was founded: treatment based on need, not status. The battle to restore this principle is on. ■

No One is Illegal: Newsletter of the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, No 21, Summer 1997, available from GMIAU, 400 Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester M8 9LE. Tel: 0161 740 7722.

REPORT FROM AMSTERDAM

Ministers deliberate...

We have a fairly clear picture of what anti-racists were doing in Amsterdam over the weekend of 14–15 June at the Alternative Amsterdam Summit. But no one can unravel what ministers agreed on immigration and asylum during that weekend, when they met to agree a new Treaty on European Union at the official Summit.

The confusion has arisen because all the justice and home affairs ministers wanted something different on different issues: Britain and one or two others did not want to see most immigration and asylum issues brought under EU law; others were unhappy with the new treaty's extension of qualified majority voting, and wanted to retain the veto; some were adamant that the European Parliament should not have more of a say in policy, despite the new treaty provisions giving it more powers; Spain wanted to abolish the right of asylum to EU nationals; Britain refused to remove border controls, which the treaty was designed to lift. The resulting compromise is as convoluted as it is unworkable.

Behind all the confusion, however, it is possible to see the development of the same hostile policy which gave rise to measures such as the Schengen Information System and the Dublin Convention. The emphasis is once again on exclusion and removal, the agenda set by policing and security considerations. Because the European Parliament is seen to be 'soft' on immigration, ministers agreed to defer the operation of treaty provisions which will give it more powers in immigration and asylum for five years, by which time ministers hope to have a very tight and restrictive regime in place. (The increase in parliament's powers in transport and other areas were not deferred.)

Britain has been allowed to retain its own border controls but will have the power to opt in to any part of the revamped treaty that it wants to. It is likely to opt in to the information exchange provisions whereby hundreds of thousands of Europe's immigrants will be the subject of uncheckable, unverifiable electronic gossip ('intelligence') which could result in their deportation and exclusion.

The development of a code of rights for Europe's long-settled 'immigrant' communities, meanwhile, has gone to the bottom of the agenda, and the urgent problem of reform of nationality laws to protect long-settled black populations from abusive deportation, seems to have fallen off the agenda completely.

...people demonstrate

While the ministers deliberated in Amsterdam, hundreds of alternative meetings and actions took place. Individuals and organisations from countries as disparate as India and France set out their vision of a free Europe: one based on inclusion, not exclusion.

Meanwhile Amsterdam police kept themselves busy suppressing a massive demonstration. Over 60,000 people joined the 'Euromarch for jobs' on 14 June – they came from as far away as Mexico and Portugal to protest at the austerity measures which will be imposed as a result of the Eurosummit.

The response of the Dutch riot police was unprecedented. They responded to the huge, and largely peaceful protest by baton-charging groups of demonstrators. 507 people were arrested after a few ceremonial flagpoles were broken.

Some people never actually got to the demo. A group of 131 Italians were held hostage by Dutch police in their train and prevented from leaving until after the demonstration. A red and black flag was seized by a police officer, who told its owner; 'It is forbidden to be Anarchist during the summit.'

A whole week of actions took place before and after the summit. A large British delegation to the 'Speak out Against Racism' rally organised by UNITED for Intercultural Action included CARF supporters, and ensured that the blame for racist Europe was laid firmly at the feet of EU governments and their practices. Other smaller demonstrations took place – a cycle demonstration to the border prison where refugees are being held, and demonstrations against EU drugs policy and for sexual diversity and equality. Police assurances that protests would be acceptable if they took place outside the specially constructed security zone did not prevent them making mass arrests. These provoked further protest, and more arrests – including several for 'membership of a criminal organisation'. Spectators who protested at these arrests were themselves arrested and charged, making 350 in all – the biggest mass arrest in Holland since 1966. ■

A complaints book about police behaviour during the summit has been complied by the Autonoom Centrum, Bilderdijkstraat 165-f, 1053 KP Amsterdam.

CAMPAIGNS AND REPORTS

Victory for Prakash and Prem

It took years of campaigning but Prakash Chavrimootoo and her son Prem have finally won their battle against deportation. Prakash has lived under the threat of deportation for the last seven years (since she left her violent husband and was caught by the 'one year probation' rule). She is now happily settled in Birmingham.

Pictures: Mark Salmon

1990: Prakash and her son Prem, aged 7, begin their campaign

1997: Prakash and Prem, now aged 14, celebrate victory

For Prakash the last seven years have been a nightmare. Every knock at the door reminded her of the fate of Joy Gardner. Prem has spent half of his life fighting to stay in Britain. But for the intervention of friends, he would have been taken into care when Prakash was detained in Campsfield. The West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign, which has worked closely with Prakash and Prem, has welcomed the victory. 'We put the Home Office under immense pressure,' said a spokesperson, 'Prem's appeal hearing was due and the government was clearly worried about the bad publicity that would result from deporting a child. It shows that the public meetings, rallies and hours of protesting outside the High Court have been worth it. But the Home Office chose to inflict seven years of suffering on the family. That is inexcusable.'

And for the Ogunwobis too...

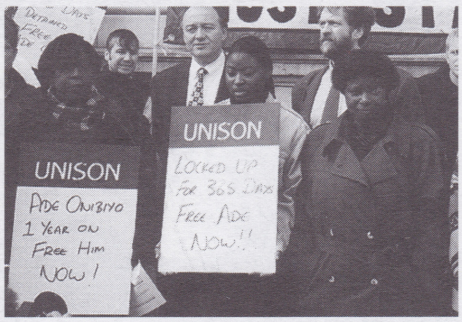
The longest-running church sanctuary in British history ended when the Ogunwobi family were finally granted permanent residence in Britain. Sunday Ogunwobi, his wife Bunmi and their young children spent more than three years living in Hackney Downs Baptist Church in an attempt to escape deportation. Sunday has lived in Britain for more than fifteen years. His children were born here and the family's deportation would have had a devastating effect on them. Now the Ogunwobi family can return to normal life, but amid the celebrations there was concern for others who had not so far been beneficiaries of New Labour's 'firm but fair' approach. 'Though we are celebrating Sunday and Bunmi's acceptance as full residents of this country at last,' campaign chair Ian Rathbone commented, 'we are also mindful of the many others living in the shadows who also face the terrible threat of deportation. There are many such people in Hackney alone and we want to highlight their plight.'

Continuing the fight

Among those still fighting deportation in Hackney are the Tahir family, the Nanga and Lemba families from Angola, the Ozbay family from Cyprus. Many of them came together at Hackney Downs Baptist Church after the Ogunwobi victory to hear the children of the families speak about their experiences and the need for campaigns. Kurdish Ali Ozbay told of how his mother and father were beaten by police and soldiers and imprisoned: 'Now the Home Office want to send us back to Cyprus. We will have no house, no money, no friends, and are very afraid. Is it right to treat people in this way?' And Deborah Ogunwobi told the audience that campaigns can be successful if people were determined. 'Just because my parents are Nigerian doesn't mean anything. I am English, I was born here and I grew up here. I should have the right to stay here.' ■

Hackney Anti-Deportation Campaign c/o Hackney Law Centre, 236 Mare Street, London E8 1EH. West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign tel/fax 0121 331 1511.

Reunite the Onibiyo family – in Britain



The case which provides perhaps the best illustration of the inhumanity of the immigration laws which Labour has refused to repeal, is that of the Onibiyo family.

When the Labour party won the general election, campaigners for the Onibiyo family were given new hope. And why not, since they had in their possession a letter from Jack Straw, dating from his time as shadow Home secretary, saying 'I will certainly do what I can to help the Onibiyos further.' Well, now he can.

Abdul Onibiyo and his wife Joyce came to Britain in 1964. For many years Abdul worked for local authorities. He was fully settled, with the right of permanent residence, and his two children were British citizens. He went to Nigeria in 1977 and worked there for a number of years, but made regular visits to Britain, continuing to pay National Insurance contributions and fully intending to return. When he did return, in 1984, later joined by Joyce and their three Nigerian-born children (including Ade) he never imagined that he would fall foul of the immigration rules and have his residence rights revoked because he had been out of Britain for over two years.

For three years, from 1993–6, the family was hounded by immigration authorities. Both Abdul and Ade were detained – Ade for over a year. When Abdul was deported in 1996, fears that his pro-democracy campaigning in Britain would put him in danger in Nigeria were realised, and he was imprisoned for a time. He has now escaped to another west African country where he is recovering from his ordeal. When an officer of Unison (Abdul's trade union) met Jack Straw after visiting Abdul in Africa, he explained the impact of the separation on the family. Straw remained unmoved.

Meanwhile, Abdul's son, Ade, who lost an application for political asylum even after his father's fate was known, remains stranded and isolated in Guyana, the only country prepared to offer him sanctuary when he was kicked out of Britain. Joyce and her four other children remain in Britain. The relentless persecution of the family is continuing: deportation proceedings have begun against Joyce and her two Nigerian-born children.

The Onibiyo family has been scattered across the globe by the injustices of immigration laws. There has been outcry from MPs, churches and trade unions, all of whom have called on the government to end this unnecessary suffering. Firm but fair? Or rock-hard and intransigent? ■

Onibiyo family campaign, c/o Lambeth Unison, 6A Acre Lane, London SW2. Tel 0171 737 2134.

News from Campsfield

As immigration prisoners continue their battle to be heard, solidarity groups are working to publicise the plight of these 'prisoners without a voice'.

An Algerian detainee has spoken out against the Campsfield regime and his treatment by Group 4 staff. AB was handcuffed, shoved into a prison van and taken to Winson Green high security prison. Group 4 claimed that he had incited other detainees to light a fire, although he says staff had seen him elsewhere when the fire started. AB believes that the real reason he was moved was that he, along with others, had complained to the Home Office that staff were watching a pornographic film while detainees attempted to do their morning prayers. He alleges their complaint was shredded by Group 4 staff before it reached the Home Office, prompting AB to take his complaint to HM Inspector of Immigration.

The *Campsfield Monitor*, which contains regular news on the situation inside Campsfield detention centre, reports on several initiatives in Oxford:

■ The Campaign to Close Campsfield held a public meeting on 16 June to mark International Refugee Day. Newly elected Lib Dem MP for Oxford West and Abingdon, Dr Evan Harris, called for the restoration of state benefits to asylum-seekers, the repeal of the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act and an end to the practice of holding asylum-seekers in criminal jails.

■ In response to questioning, the Green Party has confirmed that its policy is 'to close all immigrant detention centres'.

■ The ISIS refugee project has produced several pamphlets advising asylum-seekers on their right to housing and is currently raising funds to establish a hostel to provide asylum-seekers with temporary accommodation.

The *Monitor* also has news of an interesting modern-day variation on the Crusades at Tinsley House, the immigration detention centre at Gatwick. A new religious affairs officer appointed by Wackenhut UK Ltd (a subsidiary of an American security company), which runs the centre, has published a newsletter which is being distributed to detention centres across Britain. In it prisoners are told that they are 'detained as a result of having acted against the will of God. They now find themselves repenting and seeking afresh His will for them... Once you are in detention', the newsletter continues, 'don't waste your time and energy trying to clutch onto what fragments of pride may remain – let it go and let God pave the way to a new victory... your time in detention is nothing less than a gift. You can use your time to study the Word, prevail in prayer and cultivate godly relationships.' CARF says Amen to that.

Meanwhile, the Campaign to Close Campsfield has produced an excellent pamphlet. *How Britain imprisons refugees: information on Campsfield* contains sections on asylum procedure, asylum-seekers' experiences, detention, the history of immigration control, useful addresses and information on the campaign itself. In their own words, it is intended to 'explain why Campsfield must be closed, what we are doing to get it closed, and how you can join us'. ■

Campsfield Monitor is available for 50p from 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4. *How Britain imprisons refugees: information on Campsfield* is available for a £2 donation from CCTC c/o the same address. The Campaign to Close Campsfield holds demonstrations outside the detention centre in Kidlington on the last Saturday of every month.

Archives of resistance

Immigration controls have two contrary effects. The bad effects we see too often – divided families, the double punishment, and the perpetration of the racism which justifies them. The good we celebrate too rarely – the resistance which brings people together, motivates and inspires them to fight for justice. Now the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, veterans of dozens of successful anti-deportation campaigns, from Anwar Ditta in 1976 to the Rahman family in 1994, is establishing a 'living archive of resistance'. Members explained its purpose:

'The archive will not be a dead museum piece. We want to use the collection as a part of the defiance to controls themselves. We want it to be on open display, to be available to other campaigns, to take the struggle forward.

S. O'Neill

Resistance to immigration laws can unite a community

'The collection will be designed to inspire migrants, immigrants and refugees threatened by controls. It will show that there is a tradition of struggle and the Home Office can be resisted.

'The collection will serve to remember those who have fought controls in the past. It is because of their struggle that the flame of resistance lives on.' ■

Donate posters, leaflets, photos, videos and any other material to: GMIAU, 400 Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester M8 9LE. Tel 0161 740 7722.

A demonstration took place against the continuing imprisonment of asylum-seekers at Harmondsworth detention centre, near Heathrow, on 26 July. A fund-raising performance of *Redemption Song*, Banner Theatre's play about the refugee experience in Britain, nearly had to be abandoned when one of the actors, an asylum-seeker, had his asylum application rejected on the day of the performance. But the show went on. The performance raised money for the Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign and the audience pledged to support the campaign for refugee rights.

Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign, c/o 52 Norwood Road, Southall, Middlesex. *Picture: Darren Jakobsen*

'SUS' Euro-style

IN TOUCH WITH EUROPE

In the UK, the Labour government speaks of 'zero tolerance' against street crime and the problems posed by 'aggressive begging'. In France, four right-wing mayors have passed bye-laws banning unaccompanied children from being on the streets between 12 midnight and 6 am, as though they were stray dogs. Black German activist Biplab Basu adds:

'Recently, in almost all the bigger German cities, but especially in Germany's future capital Berlin, the slogan: 'Fight drug trafficking. Clean the criminals off the streets' has become pervasive. Armed with a new police law, the Berlin authorities have declared 25 different places in the city 'dangerous zones' where individuals' legal rights do not apply. In west Berlin's city centre, the 'Breitscheidtplatz', almost every afternoon police officers arrive in their droves in police vans, primarily to target black people. Anyone who the police decides is a suspect is arrested and dragged into a police van. No questions need be asked; no answers given. Already humiliated verbally or even physically attacked, sometimes inside the van, sometimes out, the black person will be asked to produce identification and/or other documents. He or she will be searched thoroughly. In ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, the black person is released uncharged. Yet he or she is banned for one or two days, or even a week, from the public place.

This policy, increasingly the norm across Europe, of cleansing public places of 'undesirable elements' (ie, black or homeless people, or other minority groups) helps to create an atmosphere of fear among the public which will pave the way for future human and civil rights violations, and more special laws or regulations against black people.' ■

Is a similar policy of 'cleansing public areas' taking place in your city? Write to CARF and tell us.

Satpal's vinyl hope

The campaign to free Satpal Ram, the Birmingham man serving a life sentence after defending himself against a racist attack, has received a new boost with the release of a single entitled 'Free Satpal Ram' by Asian Dub Foundation. 'We wanted to highlight this case because of the injustice Satpal has suffered,' said John Pandit of ADF, 'we've all been involved in anti-racist campaigns and we want to use our music to draw attention to them'.

Meanwhile, Satpal's lawyers are preparing a civil action against the prison service for its policy of moving Satpal to a different prison every 28 days. The procedure, which the prison board says is necessary to 'assess his needs', has caused Satpal serious distress and has also meant that the Parole Board has been unable to begin hearings since Satpal is never in one place for long enough. The Campaign is also pressing for Satpal's release, since he has served the judge's recommended sentence of eleven years. ■

Free Satpal Campaign: new tel/fax 0121 331 1511
Free Satpal Ram, the single, is available on *Damaged Goods*.

CARF was delighted to hear of the acquittal on 30 June of Safwan Eid. Delighted but hardly surprised. From the moment Safwan Eid was charged with the arson at a Lübeck refugee hostel which killed 10 people and injured 38 others, campaigners have drawn attention to the perverse prosecution against him and the police bungling of the investigation into four original suspects, all skinheads from Gravesmuhlen.

But while congratulations are in order, the scandalous facts of this mis-prosecution must not be allowed to die with Eid's release. As a member of the International Independent Commission set up to investigate the circumstances of the Lübeck fire concludes: 'Justice demands that the whole process be subjected to an urgent and thorough independent investigation. This will be a powerful demand in Germany and outside.' ■

New hope for M25 Three

M25 CAMPAIGN

A

ON THE ROAD TO JUSTICE

The campaign against the convictions of the M25 Three is gathering strength, despite the obstacles which have been put in its way

The three black men, Raphael Rowe, Randolph Johnson and Michael Davis, convicted seven years ago for offences of murder, robbery, grievous bodily harm and firearms offences, committed along the M25 belt in Surrey, vigorously protest their innocence. Even an eye-witness said that two of the perpetrators were white.

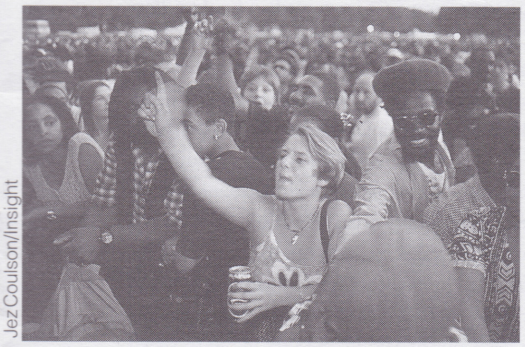
At the end of March, then-Home Secretary Michael Howard broke his pledge to make a speedy decision on the case, instead handing it over to the new Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). The delay prompted Raphael Rowe to undertake a seventeen-day hunger strike at Maidstone prison. Since then there have been allegations that Howard shredded the recommendations of junior ministers that the case be referred back to the Court of Appeal. And the BBC's *Rough Justice* programme has uncovered new information and witnesses for the defence. Programme producers have met the CCRC.

Meanwhile, the campaign has received support and publicity from different quarters. A message from Nelson Mandela, to Raphael Rowe's mother said: 'The President is sympathetic towards your son's case and understands your concern for his position. We do hope that your son will be successful in appealing against the decision.'

The campaign has also received the unexpected support of Tory MP Anne Widdecombe, former junior Home Office minister. Could she have been the source of the 'Howard-is-a-shredder' rumour? The campaign continues. ■

M25 Three Campaign, 28 Grimsel Path, London SE5 0TB. Tel/fax 0171 735 2985.

Trade union round-up

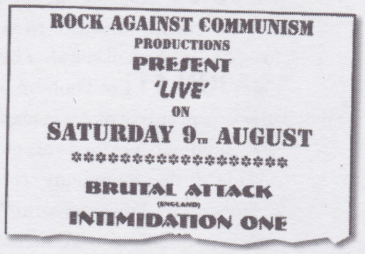


Jez Coulson/Insight

In July the TUC held its second Respect anti-racist music festival in east London. Also in July it launched a freephone hotline for workers discriminated against or harassed at work because of their race. In four days, the hotline took nearly 100 calls.

One issue that CARF hopes to watch closely in future is the outcome of the dispute at British Airways. While attention was quite rightly focused on BA's appalling treatment of its cabin crew, its decision to offer for sale its Heathrow in-flight catering production operations went largely unnoticed – yet it has huge implications for Southall's Asian workforce, from which many of the 1200 catering workers represented by the TGWU are drawn. Matthew Campbell, regional organiser for the TGWU, told CARF that he was confident union negotiators would secure the best deal possible, allowing for all existing staff to be transferred to the new company with a three-year guarantee protecting rates of pay, terms and conditions. The agreement also gives staff the option to reapply for jobs in BA. And this is where the problem for Asian workers comes in. In catering, production and food preparation, the workforce is overwhelmingly Asian, while in the more skilled jobs and controller grades a largely non-Asian workforce is employed. The Asian workers, therefore, have little chance of getting back into BA. What will happen to them after the three-year period of protection ends? ■

The British National Party's electoral fiasco continued when it contended the Hackney, Moorfields by-election in July. Its candidate, Vic Dooley, managed 45 (0.02%) votes. Fascist parties stood, too, in the Uxbridge by-election on 31 July, vying with the Emerald Rainbow Islands Dream Party and the Official Monster Raving Loony Party for a few sparse votes. Frances Taylor (pictured) stood for the BNP, gaining 205 votes (0.6%). Ian Anderson gained 157 votes (0.5%) for the National Democrats, while John McAuley carried the banner for the rump of the National Front, winning 110 votes (0.3%). ■



As CARF goes to press, anti-fascists are campaigning to stop an international 'Aryan music fest' being held on 9 August in Wales. In 1995 a nazi concert in Wales resulted in a riot and hundreds of police attended. ■

RALLY FOR UNITY

Concern at the recent spate of Sikh-Muslim violence was expressed at the founding meeting of SMG Unity in June. The meeting was reminded by founders of Southall's Asian Youth Movement that 'When we threw petrol bombs at the fascists in 1981, nobody cared if you were a Hindu, a Muslim or a Sikh.' As the anniversary of Indian independence approaches, SMG Unity is working to remind people that there is still much to fight for. But it can only be achieved if communities are united, not divided. ■

SUNDAY 17 AUGUST
1pm, Dominion Centre, Southall, Middlesex.

SMG Unity, PO Box 304, Southall, Middlesex, UB2 5TR. Tel 0181 843 2333.

Manchester fights police cover-ups

POLICING

The Moss Side and Hulme Forum in Manchester is threatening to break off contact with Greater Manchester police after an officer was secretly tape-recorded mouthing racist abuse over the telephone. No action can be taken against PC Paul Randle however, since phone conversations recorded without the knowledge of the speakers cannot be used as evidence. In a letter to the police, the Forum stated, 'The whole matter is yet another example of the law, as applied, working to the detriment of the black community.' The internal affairs unit of the Greater Manchester police is investigating the incident.

But confidence in the ability of Greater Manchester police to deal with complaints of racism is low to non-existent. The latest annual report of the Police Complaints Authority strongly criticises Chief Constable David Wilmot for his handling of complaints against officers involved in the arrest of Amer Rafiq. Regular readers of CARF will recall how Amer lost the sight of an eye after his encounter with the police in February 1996. The PCA, which oversaw the inquiry, and recommended that Chief Constable Wilmot held the hearing himself, has now criticised the outcome, and is reportedly 'concerned' that no explanation was given for dismissing the complaints.

Of 444 complaints of police racism last year, just two resulted in disciplinary action (according to the PCA annual report). It is no wonder that more and more people are turning to the civil courts to pursue their complaints; while police officers continue to investigate themselves over allegations of wrong-doing, the public will continue to dismiss the complaints procedure as nothing more than a cover-up. ■

Living community, living schools

In this collection of essays, written by Chris Searle while still headmaster of Sheffield's Earl Marshal school, can be found an important critique of the market system of education ushered in by the Tories. But Searle does not merely denounce. His alternative vision is based on the belief that a school cannot exist for its marketability but that an organic and interdependent relationship with the community provides the foundations for its life, learning and curriculum.

Through the experiences of a Sheffield inner-city area, racked with all the social and political indices of neglect, we are shown how a community can struggle to reject the daily drawing of straws for sacrifice and demand a proper education for their young people. The very concept of education is expanded to articulate goals that far exceed those given by an educational bureaucracy. What Searle means by the 'living school' is shown through the poetry of pupils and the words of parents and community members, woven together by the author through a narrative that draws on wider political issues, such as the Gulf War.

Living Community, Living Schools was written when the threat to education came from a Conservative administration. But its key messages are still relevant today. ■

Living Community, Living Schools by Chris Searle
The Tufnell Press, 47 Dalmeny Road, London N7 ODY

1997

CALENDAR OF RACE AND RESISTANCE

JUN 1 Muslim parent threatens to sue North Westminster Community School for forcing son to wash naked in communal showers... Minister Tony Banks says his shake-up of sport will include wiping out racism... Asian doctors are still discriminated against by colleagues, reveals survey for British Medical Association...magistrate jails Southend man Andrew Mansfield for three months for violent racial abuse towards Asian man in town shopping centre **JUN 2** Brixton residents are invited to draw up a profile of their ideal police officer in attempt to become more responsive to community needs **JUN 6** Professional boxer Shaun Cummins refuses to apologise for violent racist attack on Asian doctor attempting to treat his new-born baby saying 'I don't want black hands on my wife or son' **JUN 7** Britain drops opposition to establishment of new European centre to monitor racism... Carl Josephs says he will sue after being stopped by them in his car at least 34 times **JUN 11** Lee Thoburn of Carlisle jailed for six months after arson attack on property of Asian market trader **JUN 12** 18-year-old Andrew Walker bound over for a year by Blackburn magistrates for racist chanting outside Muslim community centre **JUN 13** Inland Revenue found guilty of 'covert racial discrimination' after black job applicant claims that job interview questions were altered for him only... Refugee support system is in chaos, says Refugee Council **JUN 14** European Martial Arts Organisation set up by Nick Griffin of the BNP is a Nazi front, says the News of the World **JUN 16** Britain insists on retention of border controls at Amsterdam summit... Home Secretary Jack Straw launches crackdown on illegal immigrants, saying deportation notices will be vigorously enforced **JUN 17** Police claim that most of the robberies in South Yorkshire inner cities are committed by blacks **JUN 18** Cheung family win right to stay in Britain after living in Manchester for 20 years... Leicester police say that children between the ages of 11 and 14 are responsible for the majority of local racial incidents **JUN 19** Manchester police officer will not face disciplinary action after his racist comments are secretly taped... Trade unions say black people will be hardest hit by budget cuts at Sheffield City Council... police and local authorities in Fife and Tayside launch investigation into appearance of Ku Klux Klan leaflets **JUN 20** Wolverhampton Race Equality Council report to investigate allegations of racism in schools, including a case of pupils harassing a member of non-teaching staff... Two Bristol men charged with inciting racial hatred after racially taunting a black football referee... Sheffield City Council to apologise to the African-Caribbean community over the handling of grants **JUN 21** EastEnders star Des Coleman (Lenny) says 'racist police make my life hell because I'm black and drive a flash car'... Children are more likely to be the victims of racist taunts than adults, says Coventry Race Equality Council **JUN 22** The National Health Service is seriously failing the black elderly, says Leicester Racial Equality Council study **JUN 24** Families accuse police of terror tactics after armed police raid Manchester homes in murder hunt, handcuffing 16-year-old girl... Social deprivation was cause of riots in the early 1990s, says new study from London School of Economics **JUN 25** New study shows that the Irish are victims of widespread discrimination in Britain **JUN 26** Agony Aunt Clare Rayner expresses outrage at racist caricatures during performance by comedian Freddie Starr **JUL 2** Commission for Racial Equality to investigate complaints of racism in the City after tribunal rules that a senior bond trader was sacked because he was black **JUL 4** Black soldier John Davison says he was suicidal after suffering racist abuse and assaults, including a broken nose, from other soldiers in his regiment **JUL 7** Manchester-based family reveal how their 16-year-old son, who lives in Pakistan, attempted to electrocute himself after the Home Office refused to allow him into Britain to join them **JUL 9** Ministers to consider scrapping legal aid for asylum-seekers in bid to speed up process **JUL 10** Health authority launches inquiry after general practitioner Dr Srivastava complains of sustained campaign of racial harassment against him in Welsh village in Rhondda **JUL 11** Religious discrimination will be made illegal when the European Convention of Human Rights is incorporated into law, says government **JUL 14** Bristol city council refuses to pay compensation recommended by local government Ombudsman to racially harassed family **JUL 15** Manchester University found guilty of racial discrimination in allocation of research funds after case is brought by law lecturer Dr Asif Qureshi **JUL 23** Court of Appeal rules that women facing death for adultery on return to Pakistan cannot claim refuge in Britain... Director of Public Prosecutions admits errors in decision not to charge police officers responsible for unlawful killing of Shiji Lapite...Office for National Statistics finds little evidence that second-generation blacks suffer less discrimination than their parents... health trusts in Leicester and Bradford admit that they employ no ethnic minority staff in survey by MSF union **JUL 24** Government to take action to improve position of blacks in the civil service... Trial of black suspect is halted when judge discovers that white men were 'blacked up' to appear in identity parade **JUL 26** Ministry of defence launches confidential helpline and two recruitment schemes in bid to stamp out racism in armed forces **JUL 27** Tyneside Jews protest at plans by auctioneers to hold sale of Nazi memorabilia... JPs given new advice booklet on dealing with ethnic minorities **JUL 28** Government says it may extend blasphemy laws to cover all religious faiths, not just Anglican... East London Bengali man says his family is living in fear for their lives due to racist terror campaign after court case is abandoned through lack of evidence... Attorney-general strips DPP of sole right to make decision on police prosecutions after custody-deaths **JUL 29** Two London blacks begin legal action against police who, they say, told them 'If I had my way I'd have you all put down at birth' **JUL 30** High Court declares Home office policy banning asylum-seekers from employment 'draconian, irrational, unlawful'... Law Society report shows that legal profession still discriminates against black and working-class graduates... Eurostar asked to review procedures to stop it being used by asylum-seekers **AUG 1** Government announces inquiry into police and CPS handling of Stephen Lawrence murder and other racially motivated crimes... High Court refuses application for new inquest into death of Wayne Douglas, after family claim misdirection by coroner.

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